

Improve Life through Teaching and Learning University of Guelph's 5-year strategic plan

November 25, 2019

Our faculty, staff and scholars are committed to world-class transformative research, providing leadership and fostering excellence in teaching and learning.

Our Context

The University of Guelph recognizes that it is situated on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit and that these lands have rich Indigenous histories and vibrant contemporary communities. This region is part of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe Confederacies and their allied nations, to peaceably share the resources around the Great Lakes. As we move forward with our academic plan, it is essential that we reflect on our relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, our responsibility to the land and how we can harness the power of education to indigenize and decolonize our learning environments. By engaging in this work, we support our goals of enhancing the educational experiences for all learners, particularly First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, strengthening intercultural knowledge and holding broad global perspectives.

The University of Guelph is committed to the pursuit and advancement of knowledge through transformative research and innovative teaching and learning and to the sharing of this knowledge to “improve life”. Our faculty, staff and scholars engage in scholarship, inquiry and creative solutions in unique contexts that span urban, rural and international communities. We are recognized as a centre of pedagogical and curriculum innovation and we are proud of what our instructors (faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and sessional instructors) have accomplished and the work that they have put into incorporating and developing innovative ways to engage our students and advance the university’s teaching mission.

Now is a transformational time in university education. The emerging advancements in technology and data science, and the ever-evolving knowledge-based economy and life-long learning society demand that we explore and address

some of the Grand Challenges in Education that lie ahead. Outlined below are six challenges with exemplar questions that may offer direction in continuing our vision to improve life for all learners:

- » Creating inclusive learning opportunities - calls on us to improve access and honour the diversity and identity of both students and instructors in our pedagogical practices.
- » How do we create inclusive learning opportunities, in our practices, assessments and materials, that promote the full participation of our learners?
- » Enhancing and expanding the link between educational research and practice – requires the continuous improvement of our design of deep and meaningful learning practices and an understanding of the impact of these practices on our learners.

- » How can our expanding knowledge of the science of teaching and learning inform practices and approaches?
- » Utilizing educational data effectively - calls on us to make use of the unprecedented availability and access to data from educational technologies, administrative records and more, in order to discover new knowledge that can help inform our practices and how we work with students.
- » How do we utilize the wealth of data available to enhance the retention, success and experiences of our learners?
- » Engaging technology and improving our spaces - requires us to take stock of our current resources and intentionally strive to balance the pace of change in technology and the need for space with meaningful student learning and pedagogical practices.
- » How do we create and utilize instructional technologies and spaces in a fulsome manner to inform, enhance and innovate student learning that is inclusive of all learners?
- » Preparing our students for a dynamic future - calls on us to embrace our values of lifelong learning and to think critically and creatively while continuously re-examining the changing needs of learners and the evolution of knowledge.
- » What do our students need to learn and how do we create and provide authentic learning through experience opportunities for our students, graduates and the wider society?
- » Empowering and equipping our faculty - requires us to respond to the evolving social and educational contexts that are intertwined with the success of our learners.
- » How do we empower, guide and support our faculty to thrive and continually innovate their educational practices and inquiry?



Our Process

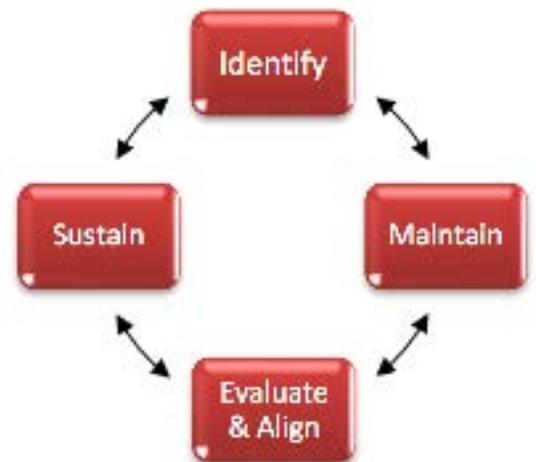
Faculty Members at the University of Guelph are well respected for their dedication to students and teaching. We recognize that pursuing excellence in teaching and learning and new frontiers of knowledge are closely tied to how we transform student learning, innovate our pedagogical practices and advance our scholarship. As such, the challenges outlined above can be broadly grouped around three pillars: Pedagogy and Practice, Innovation and Incubation, and Research and Inquiry. In embracing these challenges, we must also respond to an increasingly diverse student community and make a commitment to accomplishing our task in an inclusive, equitable and accessible manner.

Our process reflects our value in identifying, maintaining, evaluating and planning to sustain what we do well alongside a clear intention to invigorate a culture of discovery, innovation and change that is grounded in rigorous evaluation. This includes building on how we support student learning and advance inclusive, flexible and evidence-informed instructional practices – while simultaneously providing support and opportunities for faculty and scholars as they teach and research alongside our students. This involves working within the healthy balance of sustaining what we do well with an intentional focus to change as the teaching and learning landscape evolves. The figures illustrate this process further.

Invigorating a culture of innovation



Securing what we do well





Our response to these challenges

The response to these challenges is outlined in six strategic goals which have been developed in consultation with members of our community:

1. Enhance Access and Inclusion in our Teaching and Learning Practices
2. Advance and further Develop our Leadership in Teaching and Learning
3. Enrich Students' Preparation for Life beyond Graduation
4. Innovate Spaces and Technologies to Enhance Teaching and Learning
5. Expand Research and Scholarship on Teaching and Learning
6. Progress in Fostering Lifelong Learning

Each Goal articulates the objectives of our commitments and will be reflected in our actions, as a community, over the next five years (2020 – 2025).

Our response to these challenges

As a community, the University of Guelph values diversity, equity and improving access to education as a source of our strength. Our institutional commitment to the educational recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is guided by the President's Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Initiatives (PACAI). The Senate-endorsed mental health strategy and Inclusion Framework continues to mobilize members of our community via the work of the Academic Inclusion Committee. Our work in promoting a culture of inclusion is central to our mission and informs how we provide a learner-centred, inquiry-intensive and holistically supportive learning experience for our students.

GOAL 1: ENHANCE ACCESS AND INCLUSION IN OUR TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES

Here, we commit to:

- » Enhance teaching and learning practices and curricula to promote access, celebrate diversity and foster inclusion.
- » Support faculty and instructors who teach increasingly diverse classes of students with various needs and behaviours including, but not limited to, classroom management techniques.
- » Explore innovative pedagogical approaches that encourage greater access to our programs.
- » Increase intercultural competency at both individual- and campus-levels.
- » Embed Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing in the curriculum with engagement from Indigenous scholars and leaders.

In our efforts to promote access and inclusion in our teaching and learning practices, we will:

Pedagogy and Practice

- » Work with recommendations from the Academic Inclusion Committee in matters of teaching and learning including participating in online training modules.
- » Develop and promote further inclusivity training opportunities for all instructors, staff and teaching assistants ensuring active participation by all those who teach.
- » Encourage the adoption, adaptation, and creation of Open Educational Resources.
- » Promote diversity among graduate students accepted to each program.

- » Advance the Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education and Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls for Action by respecting, promoting and engaging with First Nations, Inuit and Métis histories, cultures, perspectives and ways of knowing in all undergraduate and graduate programs. Ensure this work is guided by the PACAI, Indigenous scholars and leaders.
- » Increase the understanding, visibility and use of Universal Instruction Design principles.
- » Continue to engage and support units in the development and redesign of curricula that is more accessible and inclusive in both content and processes.
- » Provide educational opportunities for faculty to develop accessible assessments.
- » Provide intercultural competency training to at least 200 students, staff, and/or faculty per year.
- » Increase and make accessible intercultural and international learning opportunities for students (e.g. summer field schools, international exchange opportunities, internships and practicums, and co-curricular opportunities).
- » Work with Student Accessibility Services to enhance the provision of support for students with special needs, including thesis-based graduate students for whom standard course-relevant accommodations are imperfect for the task of generating a defensible dissertation.
- » Increase the numbers of international undergraduate and graduate students studying at the University of Guelph.
- » Provide a nurturing learning environment that is enriching, engaging, and responsive to the unique needs and challenges of international students.

Research and Inquiry

- » Engage in annual consultation across campus to evaluate our progress in developing a culture of inclusion
- » Determine the impact of current academic support programs (e.g. SLGs and Bounce Back) on higher grades, increased retention, increased graduation rates and/or decreased probations.
- » Innovation and Incubation
- » Improve opportunities for student success by exploring alternatives to various current policies and practices such as extending course drop dates, enabling students to retake courses, providing some courses as pass/fail options, providing deferred dates for missed midterm examinations, expanding course offerings in the spring semester through both online and face-to-face options.
- » Increase and market flexible learning opportunities for learners including fully online degree programs and innovative pathways (e.g. 4 + 1 (undergraduate + graduate program) or 2+ 2 (first 2 years of college or international education followed by 2 years of degree completion at University of Guelph).
- » Develop an early warning system to identify undergraduate and graduate students who will benefit from additional support during a given semester. Reach out to these students to encourage them to use the supports available.

Our response to these challenges

As we look to the future, enhancing and expanding our leadership in teaching and learning will require us to think imaginatively, critically and creatively. This includes using evidence-informed and innovative teaching strategies, encouraging ongoing innovation and improvement, and promoting scholarly practices of innovation and reflection in classroom and virtual teaching activities. We recognize that deep student learning is predicated on the time and energy students will invest in educational practices, the quality of our academic programs and the efforts of faculty, staff and the institution.

GOAL 2: ADVANCE AND FURTHER DEVELOP OUR LEADERSHIP IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Here, we commit to:

- » Inspire teaching excellence through scholarly activities that visibly demonstrate the University of Guelph's strengths in teaching and learning.
- » Promote high impact practices, experiential learning and innovative pedagogies across our campuses.
- » Promote a culture of continuous curriculum improvement, outcome assessment and achievement.
- » Recognize and reward teaching excellence.
- » Promote outstanding student mentorship.

In our efforts to develop and advance our leadership in teaching and learning, we will:

Pedagogy and Practice

- » Develop focused training in pedagogy specifically for the diverse needs of our instructors including early-and mid-career faculty, staff, sessional instructors, and teaching assistants.
- » Establish new, and support existing communities of practice for teaching excellence within and among colleges.
- » Develop workshops and communities of practice for faculty to learn about and support one another in graduate student mentoring and supervision excellence.
- » Expand faculty mentorship program to provide support for faculty who are new to graduate student supervision.

- » Provide standardized and meaningful student feedback on courses and course delivery that can be used for both formative and summative evaluation over time.
- » Develop, refine, and measure learning outcomes at the undergraduate and graduate levels in ways that demonstrate knowledge, skills and values in academic achievements.
- » Provide opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning (e.g. participation in the identification of learning outcomes)
- » Provide academic and student-focused programming to support students in the transitions from high school to university, from undergraduate to graduate studies, and from university to their life of work.
- » Expand the workshops to support faculty, staff and students leading cyclical program review and continuous improvement activities of our academic programs.

Research and Inquiry

- » Develop workshops to teach instructors to evaluate the impact of new pedagogies on students' learning using the student feedback tool.

Innovation and Incubation

- » Celebrate and recognize teaching excellence through two new centrally administered awards, one for pre-tenure faculty up to 2 years post-tenure, and another for faculty 3+ years post-tenure.
- » Provide four opportunities per year for Leaders in Teaching Excellence to participate in 'teach the teacher' workshops.
- » Engage academic units in the design, development, and assessment of innovative pedagogies in courses and programs (including pedagogies aligned with authentic and signature assessments).



Our response to these challenges

One fundamental outcome of higher education is to prepare students for life beyond graduation. Our leadership in learning outcomes allow us to scaffold and embed the development of transferrable skills for our learners in both discipline-based curricula and co-curricular activities. This approach includes our use of the Co-Curricular Transcript, and our commitment to providing all students with experiential learning opportunities, such as through co-ops, internships, research projects, or classroom-based community engaged learning projects. Collectively, these strengths allow us to venture forward confidently as we build new experience-based opportunities for our students.

GOAL 3: ENRICH STUDENTS' PREPARATION FOR LIFE BEYOND GRADUATION

Here, we commit to:

- » Expand experiential learning (EL) by including more students, and more EL opportunities
- » Promote career exploration, planning and skills awareness gap.
- » Expand community engagement and service-learning opportunities.
- » Integrate the development of reflective critical thinking and other transferrable skills into curricula.
- » Increase the retention and graduation rates of our students.
- » Provide opportunities for undergraduate students to earn minors, certificates, and/or micro-credits.

In our efforts to prepare students for life beyond graduation, we will:

Pedagogy and Practice

- » Increase training and support for instructors interested in designing and developing experiential learning practices.
- » Increase the number of undergraduate students who complete at least one experiential learning opportunity before graduation.
- » Expand and enrich experiential learning opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students across our curricula and co-curricular measures, including through Mitacs Accelerate grants.

- » Increase co-op offerings by expanding co-op to new programs and increasing student numbers within existing co-op programs.
- » Further embed career planning, critical self-reflection, and skill translation into courses in each undergraduate program.
- » Expand the numbers of graduate students with opportunities to mentor undergraduate students and/or work as teaching assistants.

Research and Inquiry

- » Tabulate, review and evaluate current extra-curricular educational opportunities provided on the University of Guelph campus to support student learning

Innovation and Incubation

- » Develop new courses focused on work integrated learning (WIL) across the full spectrum of the undergraduate experience.
- » Develop for-credit course opportunities based on current experiential learning opportunities such as peer-helper training, and summer student research experiences.
- » Develop systems for students to document and demonstrate the impact of experiential learning activities (such as co-curricular transcript, learning portfolios, certificates, major maps and/or individual development plans).
- » Launch the Graduate Pathways initiative and encourage utilization by graduate students of an Individual Development Plan.



Our response to these challenges

Our commitment to providing inclusive and rich learning opportunities is also reliant on how we utilize our spaces, resources and technology to create environments which facilitate deep learning and meaningful instruction. Through consultation and collaboration, we commit to innovating our learning spaces and utilizing technology effectively to enhance teaching and learning activities in both the face-to-face and online environments.

GOAL 4: INNOVATE SPACES AND TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Here, we commit to:

- » Optimize our teaching and learning spaces to encourage innovative pedagogical practices and improved student experiences
- » Design learning spaces to support and enhance high impact pedagogies.
- » Align the adoption and use of educational technologies with pedagogical goals and strategies.

In our efforts to use spaces and technologies to enhance teaching and learning, we will:

Pedagogy and Practice

- » Further align classroom requirements with physical space as they relate to pedagogical needs on our campuses (e.g. flexible spaces, teamwork spaces, and

large classroom spaces).

- » Provide training and encourage communities of practice on using flexible learning spaces and other innovative classroom designs.
- » Continue to retrofit classrooms to provide enhanced flexibility in teaching and learning.
- » Enhance the use of technology to support students facing physical and learning barriers.
- » Teach instructors to use new technologies in a pedagogically inclusive manner (including the intentional use of media/technology).
- » Explore, support and maintain accessible and affordable technologies.

Research and Inquiry

- » Describe the technologies currently used by individual Colleges and based on research, determine which of these to recommend for use across the University.
- » Conduct research to evaluate the impact of the use of these new technologies on learning outcomes.

Innovation and Incubation

- » Construct a new Teaching and Learning building with innovative classrooms which will facilitate the research of new teaching spaces and technologies.
- » Establish an educational technology incubator where students, faculty, and industry will be supported to develop, test and commercialize new educational technologies.
- » Develop a teaching and learning technology plan that aligns technology acquisition and use with pedagogical initiatives.
- » Explore and acquire educational technology (including next generation technologies that currently exist and are emerging).
- » Explore, support and maintain technologies which assist in the design, delivery and assessment of engaging courses with the recognition of unique challenges, such as large class sizes or innovative teaching practices.
- » Explore the use of technology to enhance and expand academic support to additional language learners, first-generation students, and First Nations, Metis, and Inuit learners.



Our response to these challenges

The University of Guelph has a long-standing reputation for engaging in the systematic inquiry into the science of teaching and learning from both the disciplinary and pedagogical perspectives – also known as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Our Teaching and Learning Innovations Conference is one of the oldest in Canada, and our institutional support for enhancing learning and pedagogical scholarship has benefitted thousands of students over the past thirty-plus years. As we look to the future, our expanded engagement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning will also actively benefit from our preparedness to participate in the educational data revolution and the discoveries that the science of learning reveals.

GOAL 5: EXPAND RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Here, we commit to:

- » Emphasize the importance, value, and impact of SoTL research at the University of Guelph.
- » Broaden faculty, staff, and student knowledge and engagement in SoTL.
- » Expand our financial support for discipline-based SoTL on our campuses.

In our effort to foster research and scholarship on teaching and learning, we will:

Pedagogy and Practice

- » Expand enrolment in existing undergraduate courses that provide the foundation for SoTL research (e.g. HK 4510/1/2).

- » Increase training opportunities for SoTL researchers.
- » Provide travel grants for students to present their research at teaching and learning conferences.
- » Continue to encourage participation in our annual Teaching and Learning Innovations conference among faculty, staff, and students.
- » Increase support for existing disciplinary SoTL institutes and communities of practice across the university and foster an environment where units have opportunities to engage and collaborate with one another to advance shared scholarship goals.

Research and Inquiry

- » Foster a culture that recognizes and values SoTL as part of the research enterprise of the institution.
- » Develop a SoTL scholar-in-residence program which

supports two faculty annually.

- » Provide training to instructors on how to evaluate small pedagogical changes in course delivery.
- » Enable instructors to add questions to the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Courses to gather data on the students' interpretation of the value of these changes.
- » Increase the number of undergraduate-, masters- and doctoral-students doing SoTL research.
- » Expand the opportunities for SoTL research within existing undergraduate research courses.

Innovation and Incubation

- » Aspire to provide a graduate training program for SoTL research.
- » Develop clear processes, protocols, and policies for timely researcher collaborations with the Office of Institutional Analysis and Research.
- » Provide financial support for SoTL from Colleges and the central University
- » Develop specific support for SoTL dissemination and publication.
- » Create a University-wide SoTL network of faculty, staff, and students working in this area.



Our response to these challenges

The rapid pace of change in the “wisdom economy” requires flexibility, self-motivation, teamwork and complex problem solving. We are teaching much of this knowledge, and many of these skills and values through our curricular and co-curricular activities, including our experiential learning courses. We must be aware of the need for constant learning throughout an individual’s life as they change careers, and as existing careers require new knowledge, skills and competencies. Universities need to evolve continuously in order to provide flexible learning opportunities, bridging programs, micro-credentials, and stackable credentials through a variety of pedagogical platforms: in-class, blended, on-line and residential. We also must formally recognize the competencies individuals gain through prior learning and work experience.

GOAL 6: PROGRESS IN FOSTERING LIFELONG LEARNING

The University of Guelph has a long history of extending the teaching and research of the institution. This practice has economic benefits, but it also helps to create informed and empowered citizens. As life-long learning becomes more important and as governments explore options such as the FutureSkillsLab and life-long learning credits, the University will take a leadership role in these opportunities.

Here we commit to:

- » Enhance students’ ability to translate skills from one program to other contexts and applications.
- » Foster students’ ability to mobilize and feel ownership in self-directed learning.
- » Enable students to pursue alternate career paths from those in which they were originally trained.
- » Encourage life-long learning through our pedagogical

practices by enabling students to recognize when they need more knowledge and skills and empowering them as learners.

In our effort to foster lifelong learning, we will:

Pedagogy and Practice

- » Create flexibility in our course offerings to appeal to students with time and financial constraints.
- » Develop new pathways from college to university, English Language Programs to university, and university to careers and back to create more options for learners.
- » Develop courses, credentials, and programs for learners at all stages of life that will give them the skills and knowledge that they require, and allow them to promote their credential to employers.

Innovation and Incubation

- » Develop courses with 'alternative' course delivery timelines such as breaking courses into smaller modules, expanding courses beyond a 12-week semester, or creating very short, intensive courses (e.g. 3-week face to face).
- » Develop personalized learning models.
- » Develop systems of recognizing and accrediting previous learning which will allow people to fast-track their education.

